



PRESS RELEASE

Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation *Chief Richard Weber*

Date: March 10, 2016

Contact: *CI-HQ-COMMUNICATIONSEDCATION@ci.irs.gov
IRS – Criminal Investigation

CI Release #: CI-2016-03-10-A

Mo Money Tax Return Preparers Plead Guilty to Conspiracy to Defraud the United States and Filing False Tax Returns

Two tax return preparers pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States and one count of aiding and assisting in the preparation of a false tax return, announced Acting Assistant Attorney General Caroline D. Ciraolo of the Justice Department's Tax Division and U.S. Attorney Dana Boente of the Eastern District of Virginia.

According to court documents, Jeremy Blanchard, 35, and Erik Pittman, 35, both of Memphis, Tennessee, and others prepared numerous false tax returns for the 2011 tax year for customers of their tax return preparation business. Blanchard, who pleaded guilty yesterday, and Pittman, who pleaded guilty today, were preparers in Mo Money Taxes, which operated three locations in the Richmond, Virginia area. Blanchard and Pittman admitted that they created and inflated fictitious and fraudulent tax credits, including the Earned Income Credit and the American Opportunity credit, to claim tax refunds that customers were not entitled to receive. As part of their guilty pleas, Blanchard and Pittman admitted that their conduct caused a loss to the Internal Revenue (IRS) of more than \$250,000, but less than \$550,000.

"Fraudulent tax return preparers, like Mr. Blanchard and Mr. Pittman, are facilitating the theft of funds from the American people by preparing false tax returns for customers," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Ciraolo. "The department will continue to pursue and prosecute these offenders to the fullest extent of the law."

Blanchard and Pittman each face a statutory maximum sentence of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine on the conspiracy charge and three years in prison and a \$250,000 fine on the charge of aiding and assisting in the preparation of false tax returns. U.S. District Judge John A. Gibney for the Eastern District of Virginia set sentencing for June 8, 2016.

Another participant in this scheme, Corey Taylor, 25, of Richmond, pleaded guilty in October 2015 to one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States and one count of aiding and assisting in the preparation of a false tax return. He is awaiting sentencing.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Ciraolo and U.S. Attorney Boente thanked special agents of IRS-Criminal Investigation, the FBI, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, who investigated the case and Trial Attorneys Kevin F. Sweeney and Todd Kostyshak of the Tax Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen Miller of the Eastern District of Virginia, who are prosecuting the case.

#